

Garden of Heroes project takes flight

Story and photo by
1Lt. Shannon Scherer
179th Public Affairs Office

The landscape of the 179th Airlift Wing has been improving over the last several years. This change is thanks in part to a lot of new construction occurring on the base, but soon the 179th's facelift is going to stretch outside the gates.

A new Garden of Heroes park is being commissioned for design and construction by unit and community leadership. This Garden is a three-part park that will pay tribute to veterans, Guard members and the dream of aviation.

The first meeting of the Garden of Heroes committee was held in August. The committee discussed the concept and layout, proposed goals for the project and determined sub-committees. More than 20 people from retirees to community leaders to Guard members are included on the committee.

On March 21, the committee came together again with representatives from Woolpert LLP to look at the various concepts proposed for the park.

"We saw some crazy ideas," said Col. Willis Waldron, support group commander. "We challenged them to show us some things we were not thinking about."

Woolpert offered four designs and the final approved concept is a combination of the designs presented that best allowed for security, cost and accessibility issues to be considered and incorporated into the park.

The first section of the park is the veterans memorial display. Each service branch will have its flag represented in a rotunda area. The rotunda area will also include the POW/MIA flag and the American flag. The second portion of the park is



Representatives of Woolpert LLP display the concept of the Garden of Heroes park to community and wing leadership in March.

dedicated to the National Guard with a statue of the minuteman.

The third portion of the park is dedicated to the dream of flight with a statue of a little boy running with a paper airplane. Static displays of an F-100 and an F-84 will grace the area as

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though they are roaring into the sky. The park will also include a small area for outdoor events, a history of 179th aircraft and the Mansfield Aviation Hall of Fame.

While the concept of the Garden of

Heroes is confirmed, other issues such as funding and a timeline have not yet been determined. The committee hopes to break ground on the new park in the fall of 2002. The park is scheduled to be dedicated as early as July 4, 2003 during the Freedom Festival; however Veterans Day 2003 is also an option.

The proposed budget for the project is estimated at \$100,000 and the committee is looking at possible funding options to begin construction of the park.

"We want the Garden of Heroes to be a point of pride for the city of Mansfield and the 179th Airlift Wing," said Col. Rich Green, wing commander. "This park will offer a lot of things to a lot of people and hopefully this will be seen as a place that people gather to spend time with their family and friends learning about and enjoying our rich aviation history."